

Delaware Will Issue April Food Benefits on April 13 to Reduce Hardships, Help Individuals and Families Budget



Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

NEW CASTLE (March 13, 2019) – To reduce hardships on families and individuals in Delaware and to help households budget their monthly Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, the Department of Health and Social Services is announcing that it will issue all April food benefits on April 13 rather than staggering them across a three-week period. Delaware will return to its normal staggered benefit issuance schedule with the May distribution.

Ray Fitzgerald, director of DHSS' Division of Social Services (DSS), which manages the food benefit program in Delaware, said all of Delaware's 136,000 SNAP clients will have their April benefits loaded onto their Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards on April 13, ensuring a timely issuance of food benefits.

DSS typically staggers food benefits between the second and 22nd or 23rd day of each month. The partial federal government

shutdown, which started in late December and ended in late January, led to the original disruption in the distribution of food benefits. Because federal funding was uncertain beyond a certain date, the shutdown led to the early issuance of February benefits to all Delaware clients on Jan. 17. Since then, Delaware and other states have been trying to limit the number of days between issuances to reduce the hardship on individuals and families. All Delaware clients received their March food benefits on March 4.

“Delaware individuals and families need the reassurance from the federal government and from our department that we are working to reduce the disruption to the issuance of their food benefits,” said Dr. Kara Odom Walker, DHSS Cabinet Secretary. “It made sense to issue the February and March benefits when we did, and now with this one-day issuance in April, we can further limit the number of days between the monthly release of food benefits to our clients.”

Clients will be notified of the early issuance through letters to each household, contacts through retail outlets and community partners, social media posts, and other means.

The Division of Social Services has notified grocery and convenience stores of the April 13 issuance date of SNAP benefits, said Fitzgerald, so they can stock additional food items and increase staffing as needed. The division also is working to get out the message to community partners, including legislators, State Service Centers, the Food Bank of Delaware, senior centers, places of worship and other organizations.

“Since January, we have been working with the federal Food and Nutrition Service and with our partners here in Delaware to reduce the disruption to our clients,” said Fitzgerald, who noted how important food benefits are to children, seniors, people with disabilities and the working poor. “We will communicate this change for April so our clients and the

broader community are aware. We know that these benefits, no matter how small the amount, are an important part of the monthly food budget for our clients.”

The average household benefit in Delaware is \$238 per month, which makes the total monthly disbursement about \$15.8 million. Clients in Delaware who have questions about the balances on their EBT cards can check them online at [ConnectEBT.com](https://connectebt.com) or call Conduent Customer Service at 1-800-526-9099.